

A CASE OF TRAUMATIC ATAXIA.

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A Danish sailor, twenty-three years of age, fell from the deck of his ship, and was found lying on his back. He had to be carried to a hammock, as he was unable to get on his feet. No outward injury could be recognized, but he complained of much pain in the small of the back. At the end of the week he was able to walk about with the assistance of a stick. Six weeks from the date of the accident he arrived in port, and was admitted to the City Hospital.

Present condition: The man still complains of some pain in the back, which is limited to the sacro-lumbar region. Careful examination discloses no injury to the spine. There is nowhere the least tenderness along the whole length of the vertebral column. The gross muscular power of the lower extremities appears to be intact. When the patient is asked to extend the limbs, it requires considerable force to bend them. While in bed he can freely move them about. The upper extremities and the sphincters are not affected. All the different qualities of sensibility are unimpaired. There is absolutely no anæsthesia, but the knee-jerk cannot be elicited. Motor disturbances of a decided ataxic character are well marked. The man rises slowly and deliberately from his seat, and experiences difficulty in assuming the erect position. He balances himself with his arms, and keeps his legs widely apart. On bringing his feet close to each other he reels, and would fall over if not prevented. His gait is exceedingly unsteady and awkward. The limbs are thrown forward and outward, there is hardly any flexion at the knee joint, and the whole sole of the feet touches the ground at once. The

patient is utterly unable to stand, and much less to walk, when he closes his eyes.

This case is but another example of disturbance of co-ordination in the absence of anæsthesia. The traumatic lesion of the cord, probably of the nature of contusion, may be supposed to have involved a definite portion of the nervous apparatus which controls the co-ordination of movements.